

## Notes and Implications: “*The Green Mile* a Turn for the Better”

### Analytical Sample

- Book review
- Higher performance level
- Uses comparison/contrast as a method of analytical idea development

**Notes:** This is a higher performing example of analysis through subtle comparison/ contrast of a particular Stephen King novel. While focusing on *The Green Mile*, the writer draws conclusions based on characteristics typical of King’s other novels. This creates a much more subtle and insightful analysis than less successful reviews (e.g., writer listing reasons a reader would want to read the book vs. reasons a reader wouldn’t want to read the book with little idea development through support). The review demonstrates the student’s thinking about the novel. The student’s ability to discuss his/her analysis of *The Green Mile* (and, in turn, other King novels) demonstrates ownership and engagement in the writing.

The piece illustrates an authentic focus, strong idea development and successful organization throughout.

**Instructional Implications:** Excellent sample of analytical book review. Good sample to show a student drawing conclusions to provide support for his/her ideas and assertions.

# *The Green Mile* a Turn for the Better

From March to August of 1996, *The Green Mile*, a novel in six parts by Stephen King, filled bookstores nationwide. In stark contrast to what many readers have learned to expect from King by reading such books as *Cujo*, *Pet Sematary*, *The Shining*, and *Thinner*, the bestselling novelist bares the other side of his craftsman's blade, a side to which all but his most dedicated readers are oblivious. This is the charming, perceptive narrator responsible for "Rita Hayworth and the Shawshank Redemption" and "The Body" (better known as the movie *Stand By Me*). The same voice carries over into *The Green Mile*.

provides comparisons to orient reader and lead reader to controlling idea

→ The book reviewed will be similar to the stories mentioned; Sets up reader for the analysis of this "same voice."

The story is told some sixty-odd years after its occurrence by Paul Edgecomb, who served as the deputy in cell block E (death row) of Cold Mountain Penitentiary in fall of 1932. Affectionately referred to as "the green mile" because of its lime-green carpeting leading to the execution chamber, Edgecomb has worked there for several years, clinging to the security of a place to work in Great Depression economics. He has seen scores of prisoners come and go. During this warm autumn, John Coffey, a man condemned to death for the rape and murder of two young girls, joins victimized Eduard Delacroix and, later, dangerous William ("Wild Bill" or "Billy the Kid") Wharton on death row. With the appearance of a mouse they name Mr. Jingles and an uncontrollable guard's virulent attempts to kill it in spite of his prisoners' and coworkers' protests, the inmates and watchmen discover a strange and wonderful power possessed by Coffey that changes life in cell block E forever. As the plot begins to unwind at a feverish pace, it appears that Coffey may not be a simple killer and that there may be more involved in the slaying of the two girls than it initially seemed.

Provides a synopsis of book being analyzed/reviewed

As is consistent with King's style, the narrative spends a considerable amount of time in the exposition (most of the first two segments), a lengthy series of explanations and

compares to other King works

draws conclusions

writer continues comparison of "same voice"  
from intro / thesis

backgrounds set up before the actual story is set into motion. Characteristic of many other King books, the impact and pace of the plot takes tremendous hold over the reader (most of the last three books). Also common in King's work, there is a strong element of the supernatural. This device is used differently, however, as more of a vehicle for wonder than for horror.

King writes with his trademark grit-and-bone narrative style but achieves more depth and, in the end, uncovers a series of real-world epiphanies. Observations and meanings abound in the final episode: "We each owe a death . . . but sometimes . . . the Green Mile is so long," observes Edgecomb in his closing thoughts. Coffey speaks of the young girls' murder before his date of execution, "He kill them with they love. They love for each other. You see how it was? That's how it is every day all over the worl'."

draws reader back to The Green Mile

In a pleasant change from what readers anticipate in King's work, they find the author more mature, more intelligent, more compelling and -- some say -- all the more rich. Whether or not the decision to divide the story into six episodes was profit driven or, as King appeals in the first installment, for effect, the issue is of little consequence. More importantly, the reader is given the almost unexpected opportunity to read a truly unique and enjoyable novel.

Conclusion  
shows how this book is different from much of King's work - contrast

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